

# **Town Council Legislative Policy Initiative to Increase Revenues**

REGULATORY REVIEW AND MARKET ANALYSIS



**Zoning Audit**

**February 23, 2016**



# Agenda

- **Goals and Purpose**
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Zoning Audit**
  - **General Comments**
  - **Recommendations**
- **Next Steps**

## Goals

- “Less is more”
- Be user friendly: clear and concise
- Simplify the approval process
- Provide predictability
- Provide incentives to meet economic development objectives
- Recognize “best practices”
- Ensure consistency with Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development
- Recognize demographic trends that relate to development patterns



## Purpose

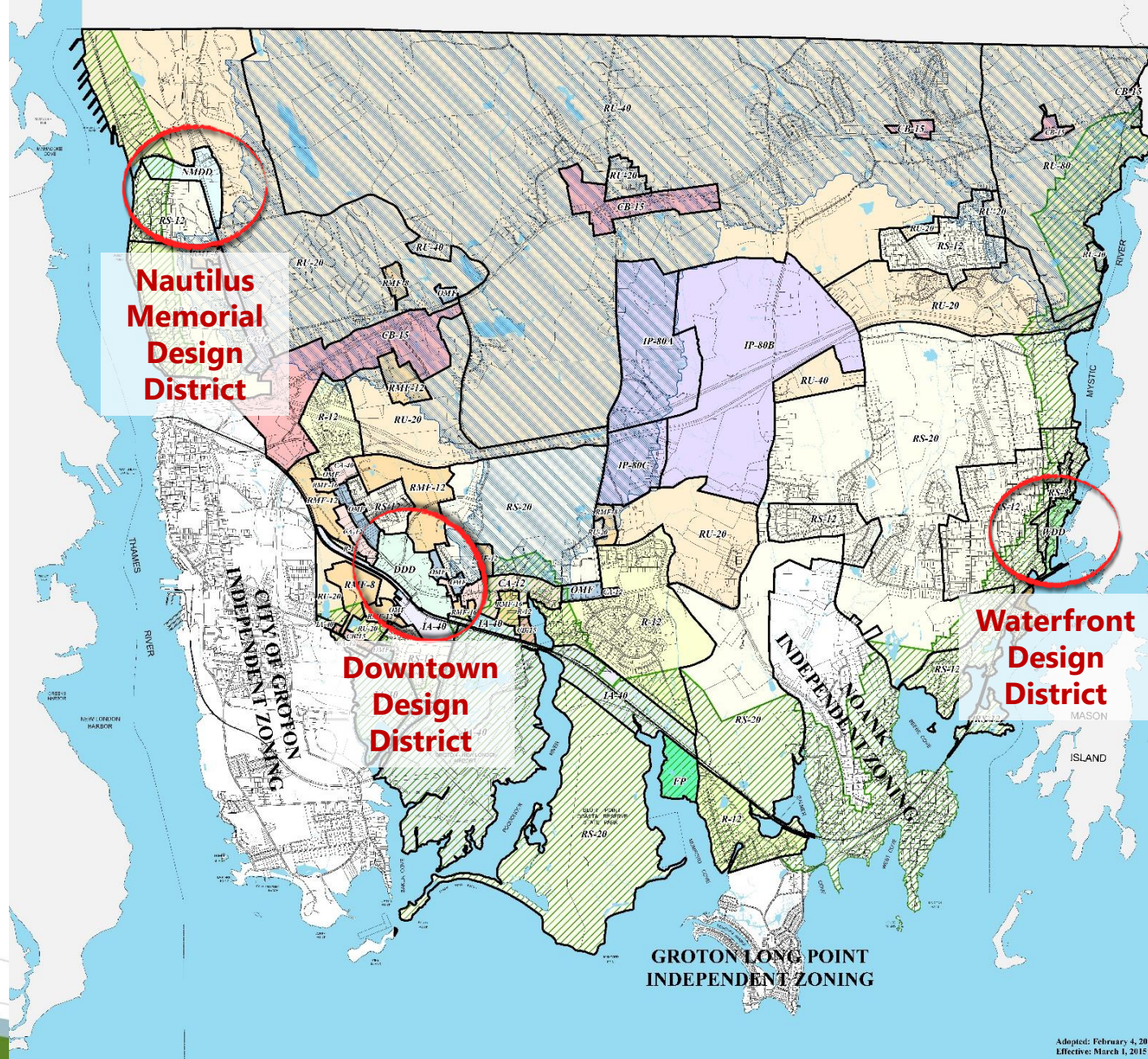
- Identify areas of concern
- Suggest changes
- Provide a “roadmap” to assist the Town in implementing recommendations





## Focus Areas

- Inconsistencies
- Organization
- Confusing/Vague language
- Out-of-date provisions
- Barriers to efficient permitting
  - Staff review vs. commission approvals
  - Consolidation of boards/commissions
- User friendliness
- Best practices
- Consistency with state statutes
- Consistency with Town's economic development objectives



Adopted: February 4, 2015  
Effective: March 1, 2015



## Town of Groton ZONING

1,000 0 4,000

RS Single Family	OMF Office Multiple Family	NMDD Nautilus Memorial Design	IP Industrial Park
R Residence	CA Commercial Retail	WDD Waterfront Design	FP Flood Plain
RU Rural	CB Commercial Heavy	WF Waterfront	Water Resource Protection
RMF Multiple Family	DDD Downtown Development	IA Industrial	Coastal Area Management

**Legend**

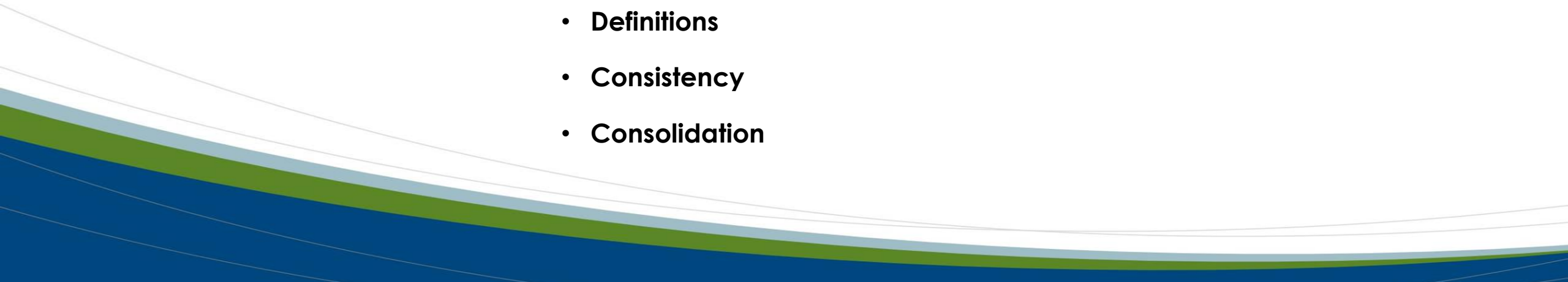
Map data is provided by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The map is not intended to be used for navigation or other purposes. The map is not intended to be used for navigation or other purposes. The map is not intended to be used for navigation or other purposes.



- Regulations are cumbersome, outdated and lack consistency; hinder the Town's ability to attract development
- Town is losing out to coastal communities in attracting development
- Capitalize on Town assets
  - Waterfront location
  - Regional access (highway, ferry, rail, airport)
  - Schools, parks, museums, and destinations
- Complacency due to past success (Pfizer and Electric Boat)
- Multiple Committees and Commissions create complexities
- Confusion created by Town/City of Groton jurisdiction; redundancy of functions and operations
- Land use regulations should support Town's goal for attracting economic development
- "Can do" attitude of current planning and ED staff

## Stakeholder Interviews

# General Comments

- Zoning is difficult to get through; lacks streamlined review process
  - Few incentives to encourage development
    - FAR bonuses, flexible standards
  - Not supportive of emerging trends and changing demographics
    - Particularly mixed use and on-site employee amenities
  - Lack requirements
    - Pedestrian and bike facilities, sustainability, alternative energy
  - Bring code into the 21<sup>st</sup> century
    - Structure
    - Definitions
    - Consistency
    - Consolidation
- 

# General Comments

- Simplify table of permitted uses (12 pages long)
- 28 separate Boards and Commissions
- Waterfront Design District
  - Balance needs of residents with desires of tourists
- Nautilus Memorial Design District
  - Aspirations too lofty?
- Downtown Development District
  - Reconcile existing strip commercial land use pattern with desire to create a true town center

# Recommendations

## **1. Pave the way for high quality economic development that reinforce a “sense of place”.**

- Eliminate the MX District and create a Mixed-Use Special Use Permit.
- Conduct a study of the Route 1 corridor.
- Conduct a study of the WDD to quantify “what’s on the ground”. Create a “pattern book” to convey guidelines for future development.
- Reconcile the NMDD (purpose, dimensional standards)
- Investigate using Tax Increment Financing as a tool to stimulate economic development.

# Recommendations

## 2. Create “user friendly” regulations.

- Change pagination to a simple number progression.
- Expand/modernize the Town's website capabilities.
- Create an illustrated “Developer's Handbook” as a supplement to the regulations.
- Create a Permit Table and Process Checklist as handouts for applicants.
- Create thresholds for Site Plan Review.

# Recommendations

## 3. Simplify the regulations.

- Amend the Definition Section to reflect contemporary terminology.
- Simplify the existing Table of Permitted Uses.
- Expand the General Regulation Section by bringing parking requirements, sign standards, landscaping standards, environmental controls, and conditional uses into this section.
- Incorporate principles of Complete Streets into the Subdivision Regulations.

# Next Steps

- Team effort (multiple individuals, Boards, Commissions)
  - OPDS is lead; putting together an action plan
- Implement “Priority One” recommendations
  - Create a new Mixed Use Special Permit which can be applied along the Route 1 corridor
  - Staff -
    - Simplify use tables
    - Initiate a master plan for the Route 1 corridor
    - Conduct land use studies in select built industrial areas to better understand development characteristics and establish baseline for making adjustments to dimensional and density requirements
  - Create a developers handbook
  - Enhance use of technology (website, on-line permitting)
  - Address streamlining, including potential to hold joint hearings

# Groton Economic & Market Trends Analysis

## Implementation: Strategic Actions for Economic Growth

Town of Groton, CT  
February 23, 2016

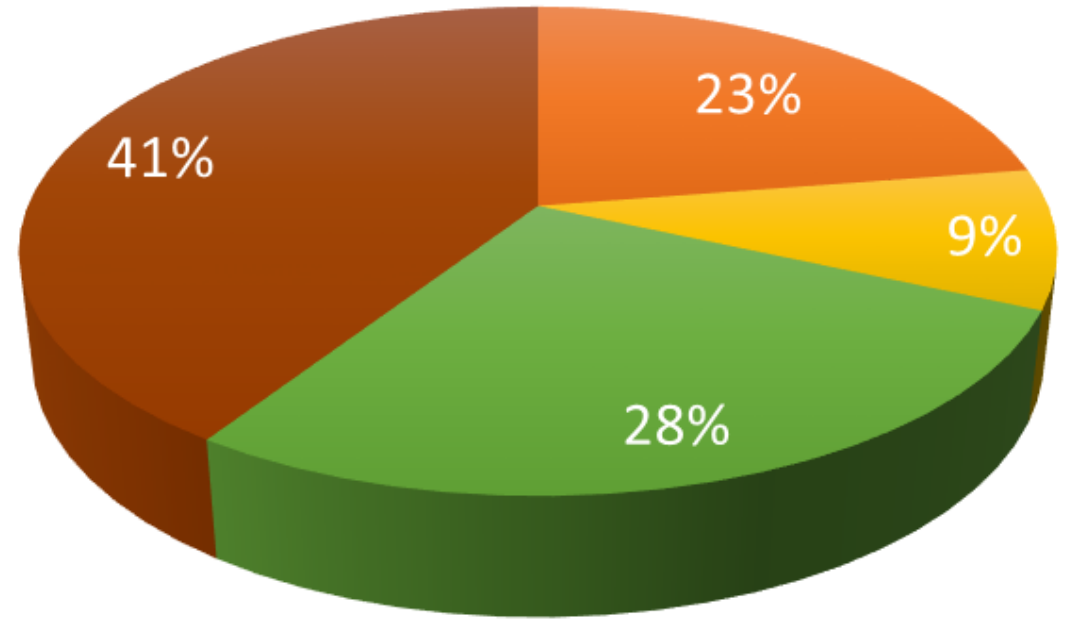


# Purpose & Need

- Diversification of the economic base
- Inform strategic decision-making
- Move from planning to action

↓  
Tonight's Focus!

A Workforce Dominated by Giant Employers:  
Portion of Groton's Jobs at "Big 3" vs. Other Employers



Electric Boat   Pfizer   U.S. Sub Base   All Others

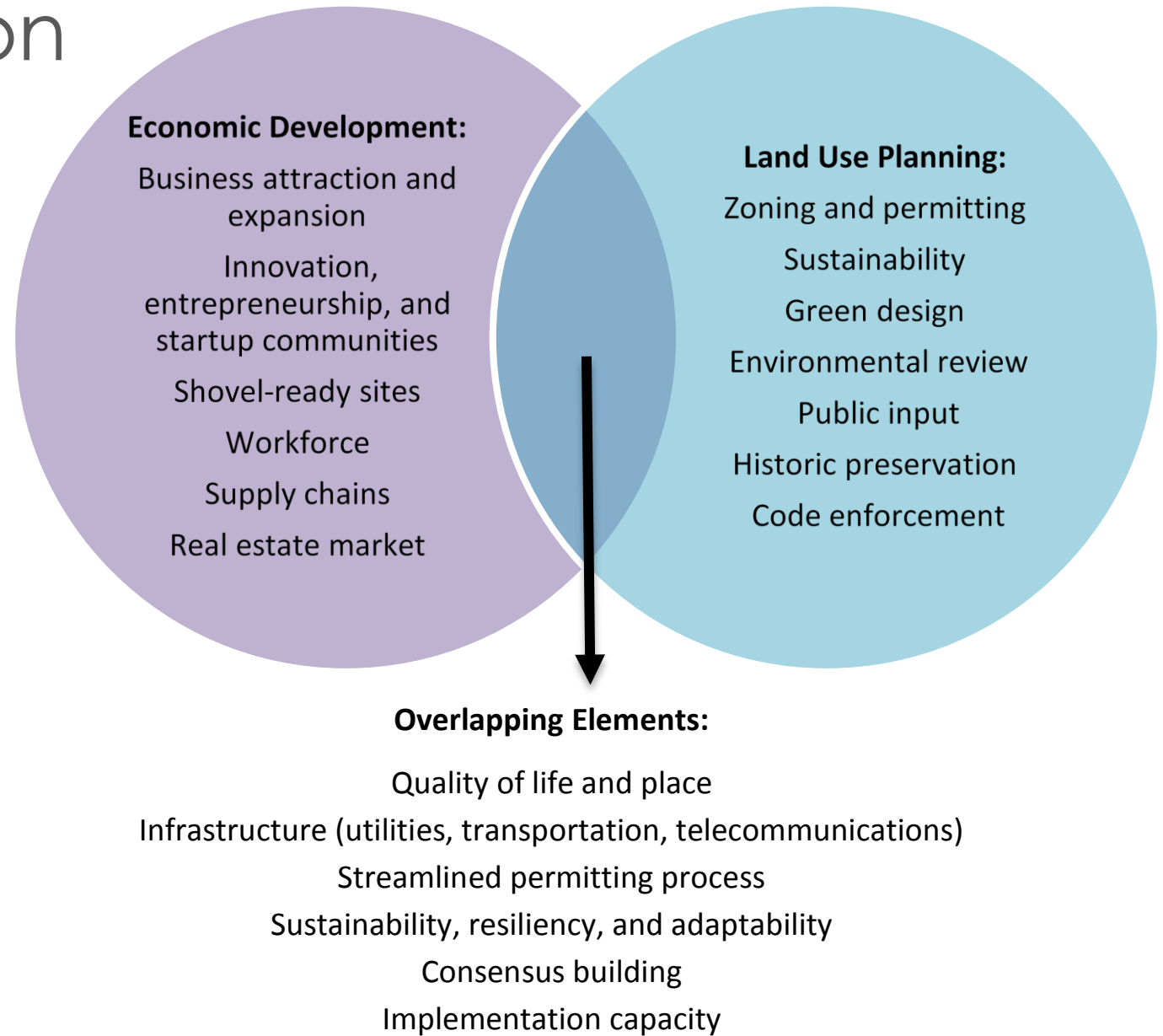
# Economic Development Tools



# Our core focus in Groton

Blending land use and zoning with economic and market analysis.

- Zoning audit
- Economic development market analysis
  - Leading Industry Analysis
  - Real Estate Market Analysis



Quick Time-out



“The Navy has a significant impact on our demographics and is dramatically skewing the data.”

- Local Perception

## What we know:

6,000 - 6,500 military personnel (workforce)  
2,275 live in Groton “counted” (in households)

39,773 Groton’s Population

“Counted” military personnel =  
6% - 10% of Groton’s Population

### **BOTTOM LINE:**

Knowing the exact effect would  
not change the strategy.

# Observations & Opportunities

## Economic Environment

- Slow-growing stable economy
- Soft real estate market
- Without action, the retail market will continue to slip
- Lack of strong sense of place
- Aging population and young adults driving demand
- "Big 3" suppressed entrepreneurial growth


## Physical Environment

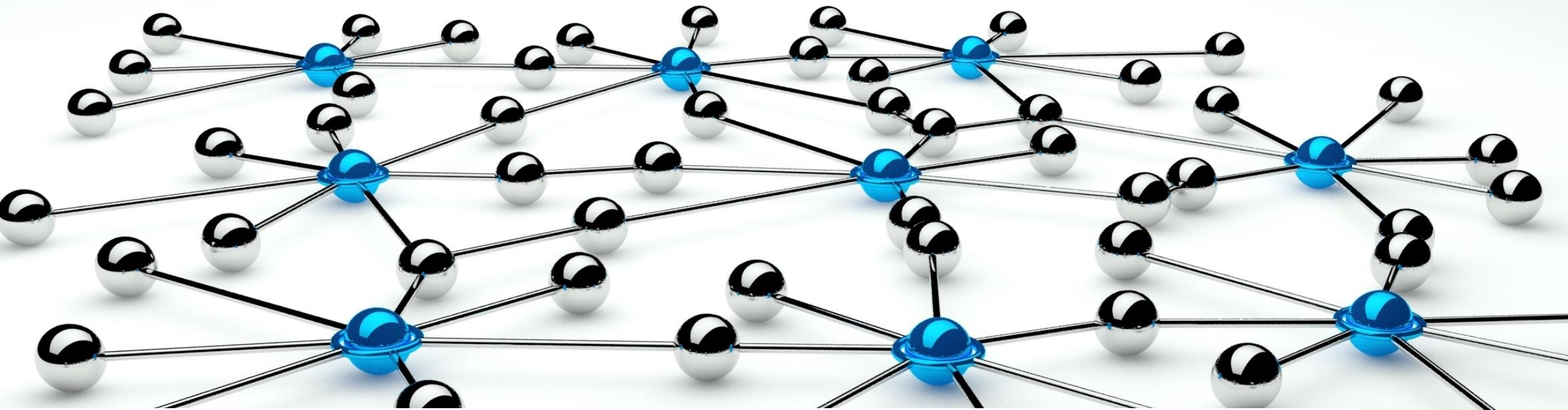
- Dated retail in need of refresh
- Separation of visitors and tourists is missed opportunity
- Demand for different housing options and mix-use development
- Lack of industrial space ready for development

## Business Environment

- Complex regulatory environment with layers of government and oversight
- Slow approval process driving up cost
- Negative perception internally and externally
- Increased uncertainty here
- New staff is a positive
- Groton hasn't had to "do" economic development and "...we don't market ourselves well."

# 4 Initiatives

- Increase collaboration, connectivity, and networking
  - Establish communication channels for effective digital marketing
  - Re-define what it means to do business in Groton
  - Re-invigorate the built environment with a focus on quality
- 



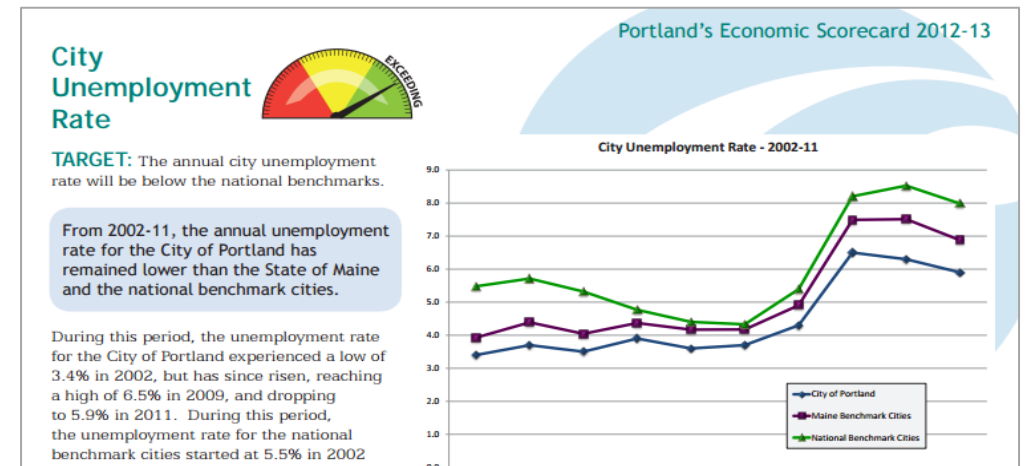
Increase collaboration,  
connectivity, and networking.

“...decisions and implementation are no longer made by a select few through hierarchical processes but rather by self-organizing, open, interlocking networks of individuals sharing knowledge and responsibility.”



# Increase collaboration, connectivity, and networking.

- Start a formal business visitation program
  - Tourism-Based (accommodations, retail, food services, entertainment & recreation)
  - Health Care
  - Business Professional Services (finance, insurance, real estate, and professional services)
  - Manufacturing
- Play an active role in the education and workforce development system
- Issue an annual economic development scorecard
- Strengthen relationships with partner organizations
- Work with regional and state partners



# Establish digital marketing and communication channels

- Create a stand-alone economic development website for marketing Groton.



## Canadian markets

Direct access to Canada via Interstate 81 and the Thousand Island International Bridge. Opportunities abound for cross-border commerce with Canada's major population centers.

[LEARN MORE](#)



1

2

3



## Jefferson County, New York

Over 121,663 work and live in the county, the home of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum. Jefferson County's assets:

- One of the "Top 10 Fastest Growing U.S. Small Cities" (Forbes Magazine, 9/9/2014)
- Fastest growing County in New York State in 2006, 2010 and 2012
- Daily direct flights from Watertown International Airport to Philadelphia
- Interstate I81 with direct access to Canada's 401 via the 1000 Islands Bridge.
- A cost of living that is lower than the rest of the state and the national average.
- A higher than average percentage of high school and two-year college graduates leading to an educated, competent workforce.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### Featured Properties



**Warehousing Facility (Former Brownville Specialty Papers)**

Sq. Ft.: 19,100

### News

Friday, January 08, 2016

**JCED to partner with EuroMarket for outreach**

Germany and Western Europe being

### Regional Highlights


[view all](#)







**Current Applications**

[Languages](#)
[Request a Consultation](#)
[Blog](#)
[Newsletter Signup](#)

[Search Site](#)



[Come Here](#)
[Grow Here](#)
[Start Here](#)
[About Lehigh Valley](#)
[About LVEDC](#)
[Events & News](#)

## Come here. Grow here. Start here.

Located 60 minutes north of Philadelphia and 90 minutes west of New York City, Lehigh Valley is the 69th largest metropolitan region in the United States, with a \$35.4 billion GDP that is larger than that of 94 nations. Lehigh Valley is a two-county region in eastern Pennsylvania consisting of 62 distinct municipalities and three cities: Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton. Lehigh Valley has been recognized by *Site Selection* magazine as the **best performing region of its size for economic development** in the Northeastern United States.


[Contact Us](#)

### By the Numbers

**\$35.4 Billion**

Gross Domestic Product

### Investor Spotlight



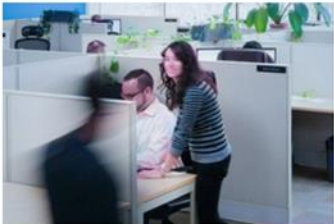
**CITYCENTER**  
LEHIGH VALLEY

### Industry Spotlight

**11.3% Employed**

## The best financing rates available

LVEDC is at the center of a lending network that provides access to the lowest-cost financing available at fixed rates for up to 20 years. We partner with more than one dozen banks and let them compete for your business to find you the best rates on loans, as well as provide access to many state, local, and federal programs and incentives.



# Establish digital marketing and communication channels

- Create a stand-alone economic development website for marketing Groton.
- Grow email lists and implement a robust email marketing campaign.
- Set up social media accounts and develop high-quality content to drive traffic to Groton's website.



# Reinvigorate the built environment; focus on quality.

- Make the Route 1 corridor a place
  - Focus on mixed-use
  - Create a working group
  - Lead infrastructure planning
  - Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Create a re-investment incentive program to encourage business owners to update their properties
- Re-examine a referendum to bring water and sewer to underserved industrially zoned properties along I-95.



# Change perceptions. Re-define what it means to do business in Groton.

- Create a project champions program
- Develop and implement a campaign to re-define Groton's brand as a great place to do business today and in the future
- Engage in a frank discussion about removing complex layers of government and service areas.
- Form public-private partnerships – critical for success



# Priority Projects:

## What should we do right now?

- Change the codes and regulations
- Continue to fix customer service
- Prove the market, choose 1-2 priority projects to focus on
  - Mixed-use (Route 1)
  - Industrial site readiness
- Approve Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for priority projects



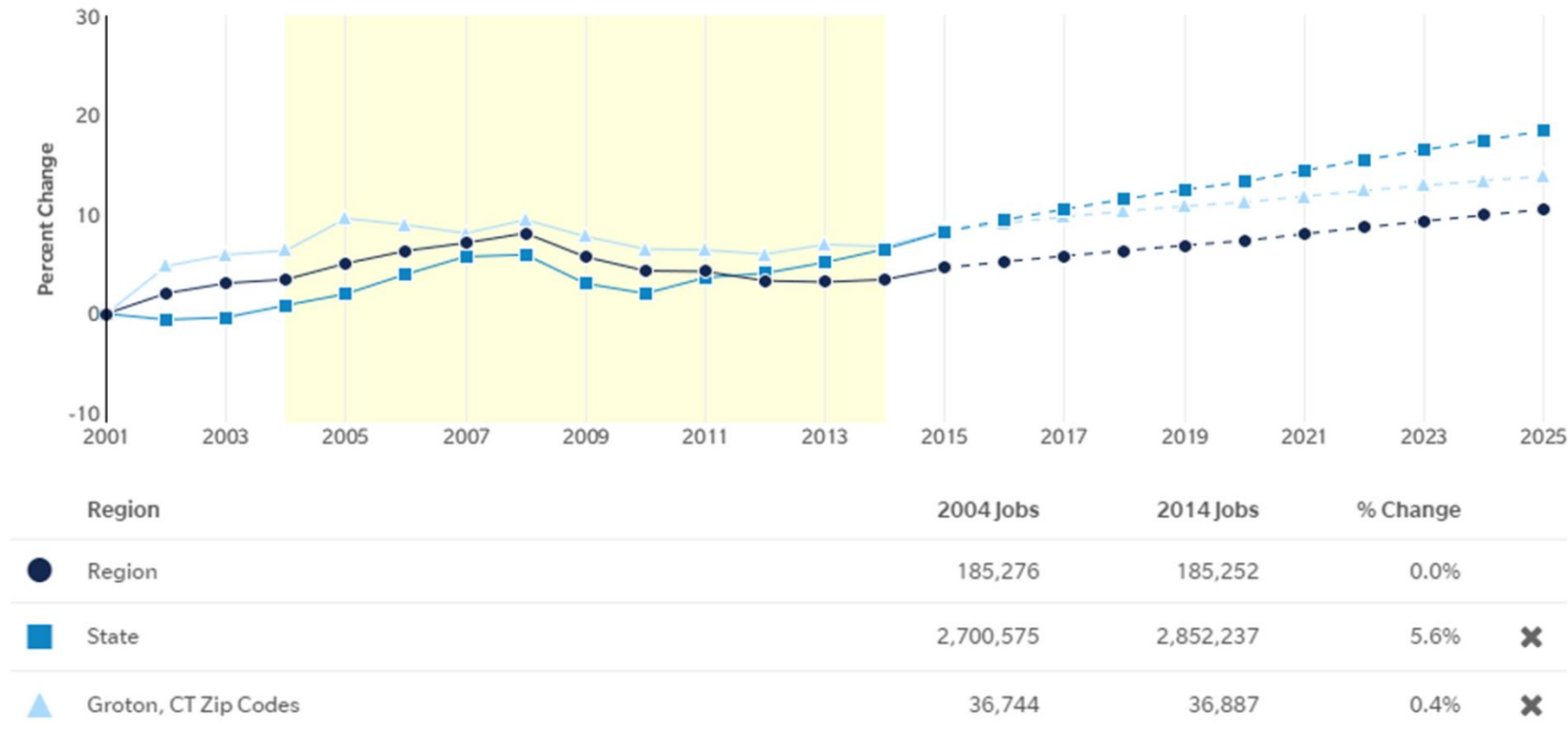
# Questions & Discussion






# Observation: Groton's slow-growing, stable economy has pros and cons

- **Positive:** Able to withstand regional and national economic cycles
- **Challenge:** Lack of growth resulting in soft real estate market



A significant focused, long-term effort toward growth and diversification is needed to unstick Groton's stagnant economy.

# **Observation:** Quality of place (QoP) must be part of the economic development strategy

- One of the most important aspects of economic development because it drives where people want to live, work, and invest:
    - Workforce and talent attraction
    - Business attraction, expansion, retention
    - Entrepreneurship and Innovation
  - Includes: recreational and cultural assets, quality design, educational and housing opportunities, transportation alternatives, broadband infrastructure, niche retail, etc.
  - Reliance on Big 3 allowed Groton to overlook QoP as an economic development asset
  - Emerging as a central theme for Groton's economic development
- 

## **Observation:** Segmentation of visitors and local consumers is a missed opportunity

- Visitors are isolated from rest of the town and vice-versa
- Tourism is a strength
- Existing retail is tired

## **Opportunities:** Growth through integration

- Modern retail that targets both residents and visitors
- Mixed-use integrating residential and retail
- Strengthen internal and external marketing for tourism and community development
- New investment and dollars into the community through:
  - Increased spending and activity by locals remaining in the economy and increased visitation
  - Growing the workforce
  - Expanding existing businesses, and attracting new ones



## Observation: Without action, retail market share will continue to slip

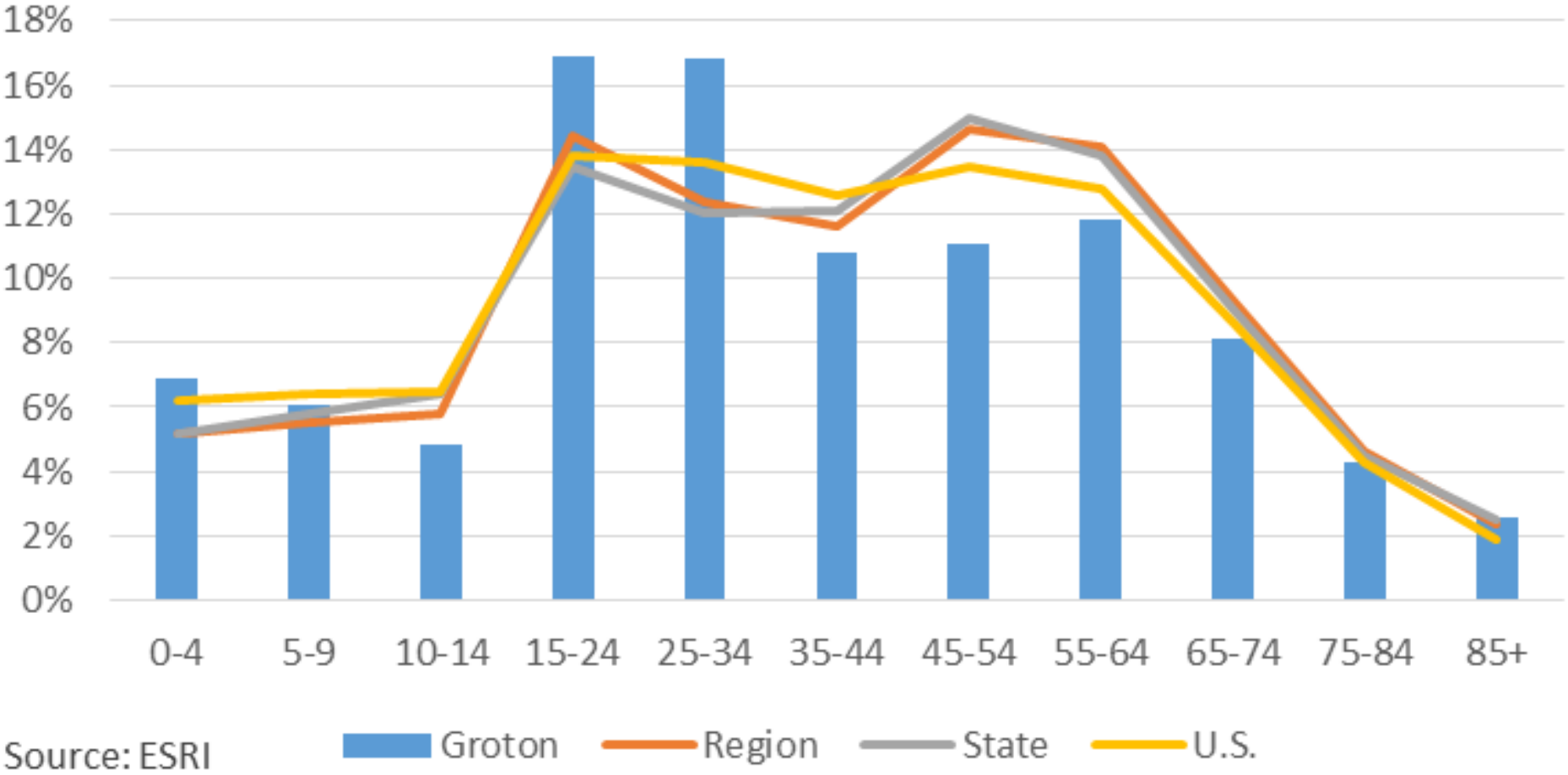
- Groton is losing retail employment faster than the region, suggesting disinvestment
- Retail offerings are generally very local, not attracting outside consumers (excluding Mystic)
- Regional competition is increasing
- Groton's retail needs a refresh

## Opportunities: Retention through a refresh

- Retain existing retail spending through investment in downtown Groton area
- Integrate and enhance amenities such as pedestrian and bicycle connections to surrounding land uses through mixed-use development



# Age Distribution, 2015



Groton's Population:  
**39,770**

## Observation: Aging population is driving demand for new uses

- Demographic shift – population is aging (in line with regional and national trends)
- Moderate- to high-income seniors are expected to drive growth
- Seeing investment in this sector currently

## Opportunities: Housing & Medical Office Space

- **Housing:** Aging adults seeking lower-maintenance alternatives to their single-family homes are opting for apartment-style living
- **Goods & Services:** Increased demand for healthcare services is driving an increase in medical office real estate activity



## Observation: Young adults present an emerging opportunity

- 25 to 34 year olds make up 34% of the town's population (13,400 people)
- As this group is starting to earn income, they are beginning to overtake baby boomers in driving market demand for housing as well as goods and services
- Portion of this age cohort will remain the same as students and sailors cycle through

## Opportunities: Housing and amenities to serve this younger market

- **Housing:** Students and young professionals renting their first apartment at a lower price point – prefer low-maintenance lifestyles
- **Goods & Services:**
  - Quality dining options, grab-n-go
  - Technology is important to this group (Wi-Fi access)
  - Active lifestyles, seek out experiences and interesting places to spend time in work and play



## **Observations:** Soft real estate market overall

- Not significant demand for any one use
- Maintaining status quo will lead to continued loss of market share to adjacent municipalities that are investing in QoP and quality of amenities and retail
- No action is not a viable option

## **Opportunities:** Lead the market to mixed-use development

- Offer something different that is not in the market today
- Support 24/7 vibrancy of single-use areas and segregated nodes of activity
- Will require a catalytic, market leading project

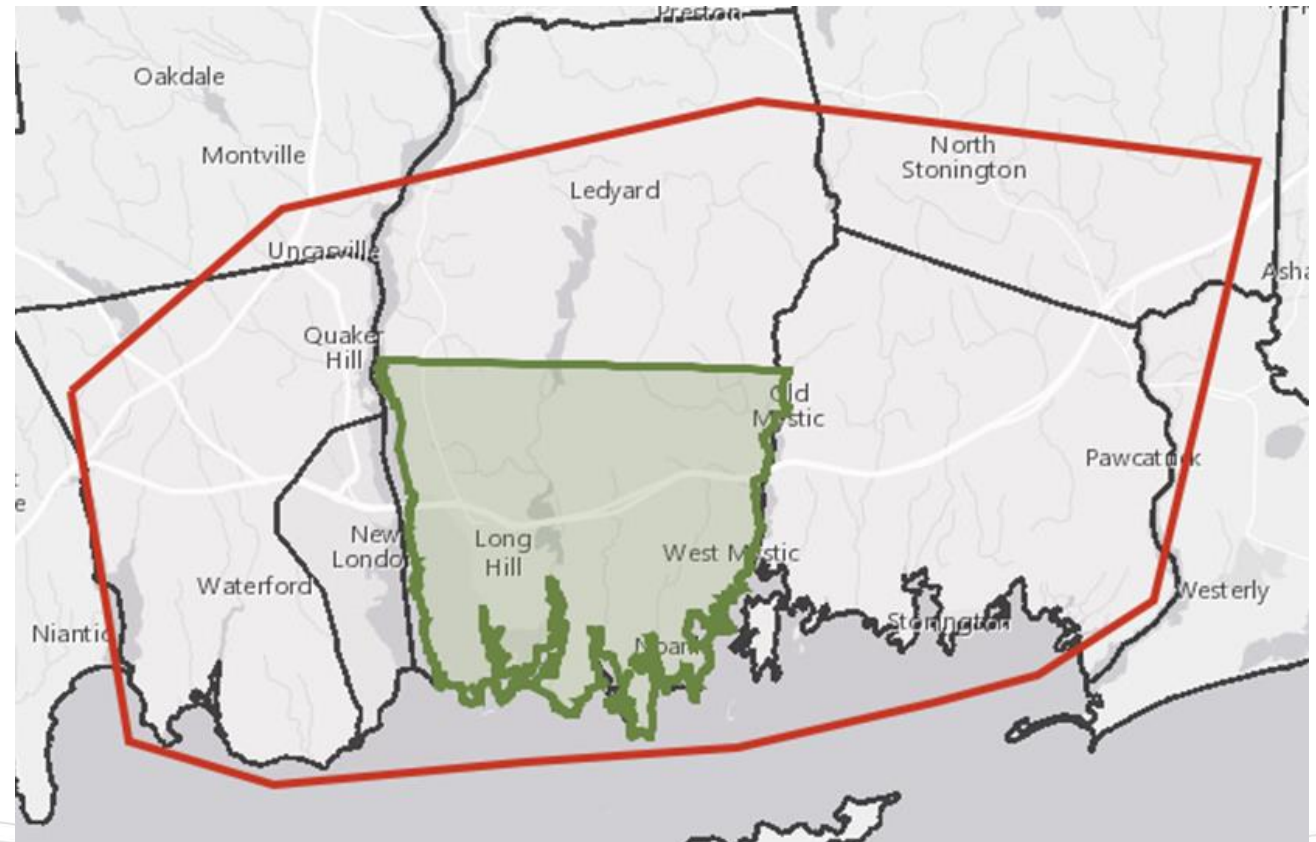
### **Mixed-Use Target Markets:**

- Up-scale apartments and condos targeted to empty nesters looking to downsize (ages 55-and-up) and young professionals
- Small scale, niche retail that offers an experience
- Class A medical office space



# Other Potential Retail/Service Opportunities from “Gap” Analysis

- Full Service Restaurants
- Building Materials & Supply Dealers
- Electronics & Appliance Stores
- Clothing Stores
- Health & Personal Care Stores
- Sporting Goods/Hobby/Music Stores
- Miscellaneous Store Retailers
  - Pet Stores
  - Flower Shop
  - Office Supplies
  - Gift Stores



## **Observations:** Strong regional focus on manufacturing with local strengths

- Southeast Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer) 2011 CEDS report specifically identified manufacturing as a priority
- Regional industry clusters: Defense, bioscience, tourism, maritime, creative, agriculture
- EB is primary driver of growth in this sector at a time when national manufacturing sectors are declining

## **Opportunities:** Small- to Mid-scale Manufacturing

- By aligning with regional priorities and being proactive in identifying the future needs of manufacturers and industrial users, the town can grow and diversify its manufacturing sector.



## **Observations:** Growth of entrepreneurial ecosystem has been suppressed

- While EB and Pfizer are innovative companies, new methods and products largely remain internal
- Reliance on the Big 3 has suppressed creation and growth of networks and environments in which entrepreneurs flourish
- Lack of focus on QoP and workforce exuberates the problem
- This is a common trend in communities with large institutions that offer well paying jobs

## **Opportunities:** Support entrepreneurs and small to medium sized innovative businesses

- Refocusing on entrepreneurs and small to medium-sized innovative businesses that are growing will support diversification and growth



# Next Steps

